



Epazote

DID YOU KNOW?

Epazote has been used for centuries to flavor foods and to rid people of intestinal worms. The early Mayans were the first to use it. Many Latin Americans still use it today.

In the U.S., epazote is grown in large fields. Drug companies use the seeds to make medicine. That explains why it is sometimes called "American wormseed."



ORIGINS

Epazote is native to Central America.

Native people in central Mexico speak Nahuatl. The name "epazote" comes from the Nahuatl words "eptl" and "itzotl," which mean "skunk sweat." As you might guess, epazote has a very strong scent!



CLASSIFYING EPAZOTE

FAMILY

Chenopodiaceae

Members of this family are grown as root and leaf vegetables, flowers, herbs, and grains.



GENUS

Chenopodium

In Greek this means "goose foot." The name refers to the shape of the leaves of some plants in this genus.



SPECIES

ambrosioides

In Greek this means "food of the gods." The name probably refers to its strong scent.



THE EPAZOTE PLANT

The epazote plant can reach 60 to 120 cm high.

The yellow-green flowers are in clusters along the stems.

Epazote has sharp-toothed leaves.



Epazote produces thousands of tiny black seeds in small fruit clusters.

GROWING AND HARVESTING EPAZOTE

Epazote is easy to grow. It grows almost anywhere, but prefers a sandy loam soil and full sun. The plant produces thousands of tiny seeds, and can become a weed in your garden.



Epazote has a strong taste, so I only need one or two sprigs to flavor my rice and beans.

USES

Latin Americans use epazote as both a medicine and as an herb to flavor many different dishes.



I'm glad I planted epazote in my garden. This corn dish with epazote tastes just like my mother used to make when I lived in Mexico.